

Making the difference in Europe

Labour Party Manifesto
European Parliament Elections 2004

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You're in power

An historic election...

The European elections on 11th June will be historic. For the first time, people from 10 new Member States will take part in European elections across 25 countries. Members of the new European Parliament will serve the interests of 450 million citizens and must ensure that Europe answers to their needs and priorities.

Labour, together with her sister parties in the Party of European Socialists (PES), is urging voters to seize the opportunity of these elections to shape the European Union's future. Problems and challenges common to all European countries, such as the environment, migration and cross border crime and terrorism, are best tackled by European solutions. Decisions on European law and spending made by MEPs in Brussels and Strasbourg might seem far from home, but they directly affect the working and living conditions of each and every one of us.

Labour's MEPs will be members of the Socialist Group in the European Parliament, striving to build a European Union that combines social justice within countries and solidarity between countries. This manifesto strongly reflects the shared priorities of the Party of European Socialists, and the agenda to which Labour MEPs will contribute in the next European Parliament. A vote for Labour in the European Elections is a vote for a strong, social EU that provides economic success and security for its people: a Union that is able to tackle the major challenges of unemployment, social justice, third world poverty, international terrorism and the global environment.

The election on the 11th June is also an opportunity to express your disgust at a Government which blatantly lied to the Irish people at the last election, and which consistently places special interests above the concerns of the people who elected them. These elections are an opportunity to send a message to this arrogant and deceitful FF/PD Government that its days are numbered.

Labour is fielding candidates of the finest calibre, who will be diligent, accessible and committed MEPs, determined to make a real difference in Europe. So, don't just make a protest, make a difference. Vote Labour on 11th June.



PAT RABBITTE TD
LEADER OF THE LABOUR PARTY

Our five key commitments...

Across Europe, social democrats of every country are contesting these elections on a platform which advocates a successful and united European Union that is an area of peace, prosperity and cooperation based on partnership and the rule of law. We also recognise that in many policy areas national or local authorities are in a better position to act. Labour MEPs will work with the Party of European Socialists to build a progressive European Union that puts the concerns of people first. We want to ensure that all citizens, in both the existing and the new Member States, benefit from EU enlargement.

In common with our European colleagues, our platform for this election is built around five key commitments for the European Parliament's next five-year term:

Labour is committed to:

- A Prosperous and Fair European Economy, with More and Better Jobs
- Bringing the European Union closer to its citizens
- A Humane Migration Policy
- Building a more secure, peaceful and just world
- Promoting Europe as an area of democracy and equality

Some Key Policy Priorities...

- A European Constitution which makes the Union more democratic, more socially inclusive, more effective and that brings it closer to its citizens.
 - EU legislation to make paid parental leave for both men and women a right for all workers.
 - Reform the Stability and Growth Pact and develop a European monetary policy that promotes growth, sustainable development and employment.
 - Support European legislation on employment rights.
 - Develop a European immigration and asylum policy.
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Our five key commitments... continued

- Use the European Social Fund to set up integration policies that include better education for migrants and community involvement.
 - Equal treatment for people with disabilities and a disability specific directive.
 - Ensure that the fight against poverty and social exclusion is included in all EU policies, that targets are set for poverty reduction and that a Green paper is produced on illiteracy and social exclusion.
 - Campaign for a European Law to protect public services.
 - Improve access to information technology and aim to provide broadband internet access for all citizens by 2012.
 - Strengthen accountable European police cooperation through Europol to step up the fight against cross-border crime, drug trafficking and money laundering.
 - Support a Europe-wide ban on television advertising directed at children, and an EU action plan on television access for people with disabilities.
 - Support the United Nations Millennium Goals.
 - Use EU influence to resume and complete world trade talks to promote global fair trade.
 - Increase spending on EU Development Aid, including Debt Cancellation, appoint a Commissioner with responsibility for Development and ensure that development policies respect the environment.
 - Support negotiation of an International Arms Trade Treaty.
 - Strengthen the role of the European Parliament as the democratic voice of the European people.
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A fair and prosperous European Economy

In a globalised world, living standards for all European citizens will depend on a competitive European economy combined with a high standard of public services and social protection. We need more and better jobs, full employment and social inclusion, as well as environmental protection and sustainable development.

Social democrats drew up the first EU action plan for economic and social reform, adopted in its Lisbon Strategy four years ago, and developed in Gothenburg, to make Europe the most dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion by 2010.

Now we want to give fresh impetus to this strategy. The PES work programme, Momentum for recovery in Europe promoting public and private investments, proposes a detailed strategy to create more new high-quality jobs by promoting greater investment in research and technology, supporting new growth sectors and reinforcing modern education, training and lifelong learning.

We reject the attempts of right-wing governments to limit the Lisbon process to economic reforms by neglecting its social objectives. We demand action to meet the social and employment objectives of the Lisbon strategy, with particular emphasis on reaching the 70 per cent overall employment rate and the 60 per cent interim rate for women's participation in the workforce by 2010. Higher participation rates will also help Europe to tackle demographic challenges arising from an ageing population.

We must preserve, strengthen and modernise the European Social Model which combines economic growth and adequate levels of social protection. To ensure prosperity is shared, we must strengthen social partnership at both national and European level. The convergence of economic performance must be matched by convergence of social standards to ensure that social dumping does not undermine fair competition. Our vision of the European Union is of a community

A fair and prosperous European Economy continued

based on the principles of the social market economy and mutual cooperation for the benefit of all.

European Socialists have already fought for and secured European laws to promote greater equality between women and men at work. However, there remain inequalities in income and opportunity. Progress is still needed to ensure that equality laws are respected in practice and that there is sufficient support for working parents. This is an area where Ireland already falls far behind other EU countries.

Building upon the 1997 Amsterdam Treaty, which paved the way for concerted action at European level against social exclusion and the new Draft Constitution which proposes to make combating poverty a core European Union objective, Labour will work to ensure that the fight against social exclusion and poverty is fully reflected in all Union policies and programmes. We support the establishment of European, national and regional targets for the reduction of poverty and social exclusion and will work to strengthen the National Action Plans on Inclusion based on clear European guidelines and recommendations and to achieve greater synergy between the Social Inclusion Strategy and the European Employment Strategy. We are committed to improving the involvement of relevant NGO's in all European actions against social exclusion. Labour will urge the Commission to come forward with a Green Paper on illiteracy and social exclusion.

Labour supports the incorporation of the social dimension in all EU policies, but particularly in internal market, competition policy and public procurement laws. We demand that the Irish Government fully implement all outstanding EU social legislation, particularly the 2000 Working Time Directive which extends the protection offered by safe and sane EU working time laws to transport workers (due since August 2003) and to junior doctors (from August 2004). We support the adoption of the draft Temporary Agency Workers Directive, as endorsed by the

A fair and prosperous European Economy continued

European Parliament in November 2002, and sharply criticise the Government for blocking this measure, which would benefit up to 90,000 Irish workers and for refusing to prioritise its adoption during the Irish Presidency.

During the course of the next Parliament, we will urge the Commission to come forward with the following legislative proposals: on social protection for new forms of employment; on paid parental leave for both men and women; on combating bullying at work, on individual dismissals; and on updating the European Works Council Directive with the aim of improving the provisions on and the timing of information and consultation in order to ensure that they can be effective and can exert influence in restructuring processes.

We will continue to press for the Commission to come forward with proposals for a Gender Equality Directive. We support the rapid implementation of the next round of the DAPHNE programme, which seeks to combat all forms of violence against women, children and young people, and will work to substantially increase the budget of this programme over the course of the next Parliament. We will work to update the 1992 Directive on pregnant workers and workers who have recently given birth or are breastfeeding, particularly concerning the duration of maternity leave.

We will urge the Commission to come forward with a draft Directive aiming at equal treatment for people with disabilities, a Disability Specific Directive, and with draft European criteria for the recognition of disabilities. We support the adoption of a unified EU position in favour of the proposed United Nations legally-binding instrument to promote and protect the rights and dignity of persons with disabilities and we support the right of the Commission to take part, on the EU's behalf, in the negotiations on such an instrument. We will work for the rapid adoption of the forthcoming draft Regulation on the rights of passengers with reduced mobility when travelling by air.

A fair and prosperous European Economy continued

Labour supports the rapid adoption of the post-2006 EU 'Youth' programme, due to be proposed by the Commission later this year.

The historic EU enlargement of May 2004, welcoming ten new countries will provide a better standard and quality of life for citizens in the new Member State, stimulate trade and increase jobs across the whole of the EU. We are committed to working towards a more efficient and effective use of the EU budget. Finances should be raised in a fair way between EU countries and citizens on the principle of solidarity between richer and poorer regions. European funds must be sufficient to support the EU's objectives, in particular to ensure enlargement is successful.

We are in favour of reforming the Stability and Growth Pact to promote higher growth and employment. Stability should be pursued as a vital condition for growth, not as an alternative to growth. Labour favours a reformed accountable European Central Bank, which combines the benefits of Central Bank independence in the execution of policy with democratic accountability for the goals and objectives of that policy.

We demand the reform of the European agricultural policy to support rural development in place of the direct subsidy of agricultural products. It is crucial that the reformed agricultural policy promotes high quality and affordable food and respects the environment, landscape and animal welfare.

Labour is committed to the protection of public services and will continue to urge the Commission to come forward with a Framework Directive on Public Services (i.e. Services of a General Interest) in order to give legally-binding expression to the social principles and objectives underlying public services. Labour will work to prioritise social inclusion in future EU Structural Fund programmes, including by retaining and expanding the URBAN, EQUAL, LEADER AND INTERREG Community Initiatives.

A fair and prosperous European Economy continued

Labour's objectives:

- EU legislation to make paid parental leave for both men and women a right for all workers.
 - Target EU funds on job creation.
 - Strengthen the European Social Model and defend worker's rights.
 - Reform the Stability and Growth Pact and develop a European monetary policy that promotes growth, sustainable development and employment in a social market economy.
 - Ensure affordable, accessible and high-quality public services.
 - Remove the barriers that prevent women from taking up jobs.
 - Equal treatment for people with disabilities and a disability specific directive.
 - Ensure that the fight against poverty and social exclusion is included in all EU policies and that targets are set for poverty reduction.
 - Prioritise balanced regional development.
 - Demand a Green paper on illiteracy and social exclusion.
 - Campaign for a framework directive on public services.
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Bringing the European Union closer to its citizens

Labour is strongly committed to a positive Irish engagement in Europe. We see a strong European Union as the primary avenue through which social democrats can confront the newly emergent forces of globalisation, and advance a progressive global agenda. As the Nice referenda demonstrated, however, Ireland's relationship with Europe has matured and grown. Quite properly, the Irish people will not unquestioningly accept what comes from Europe, but we also recognise our responsibilities. Ireland's contribution to the future development of the Union must be based on a sustained and robust engagement between the Irish people, the Irish Government, Irish MEPs and the Institutions of the EU itself.

The European Union must ensure not only that citizens benefit from its actions but also that they are involved in its decisions. At the same time, in line with the subsidiarity principle, the EU should not act when national or regional bodies are better placed to do so. The Union must also ensure that its business is conducted in an efficient, effective and democratic manner if it is to sustain public confidence.

During the negotiations of the Convention on the Future of Europe, European Socialists, including Labour's Proinsias De Rossa, played a central role in shaping the draft Constitution and ensured that it included our key values, objectives and rights. When finalised and ratified, the European Constitution must make the EU institutions more transparent, accountable and relevant to citizens. It must enable decisions to be more democratic and efficient. It must also help the European Union to speak with a clear and strong voice on the world stage. A Constitution is crucial to the success of an enlarged EU. Its adoption should, therefore, be a priority for European governments. Those Governments must not be allowed to undo the work of the Convention by producing a Constitutional Treaty which is at variance with these principles.

Labour is in principal in favour of a European Constitution and we are broadly supportive of the text brought forward by the 200 European and national

Bringing the European Union closer to its citizens continued

parliamentarians who prepared it. We must, however, await the final text to be produced by the Governments in June before endorsing it definitively.

Labour believes that changes to the European institutions are necessary in the interests of a more democratic, accountable and effective EU. Labour does not accept, however, that it is necessary to depart from having a Commissioner for each member state for the foreseeable future. Let us first see how a 25 member Commission can work, before deciding on the question of whether to reduce it or not. We will oppose any attempt to diminish the role of the parliament in international trade negotiations or in approving Europe's budget. We favour the extension of Qualified Majority Voting in a number of areas, since this will limit the capacity of individual Governments to block progressive legislation. The precise formula for QMV is a pragmatic issue, but we believe it important to retain national vetoes in a number of areas including certain aspects of taxation, defence and foreign policy.

Labour agrees with the proposal to formalise the European Council (Heads of State) and to replace the current 6 monthly Presidency rotation with an elected Chair without Executive functions. We also accept the argument for having an EU Minister for Foreign Affairs. This will not, however, affect the requirement for unanimity in certain aspects of this sphere of policy. We support provisions enabling member states to maintain a policy of military neutrality if they so desire. While the Euratom Treaty is not part of the draft treaty, Labour believes that a 'sunset' clause should be inserted into the Euratom Treaty setting a final date for a renegotiation of this to move away from a sole support for nuclear energy to include the promotion of alternative safe and sustainable energy sources. We strongly support the success in incorporating the Charter of Fundamental Rights as a legally binding part of the proposed Constitution.

In a European Union for citizens, the Party of European Socialists will support policies to improve people's quality of life, focusing on equal rights for women and

Bringing the European Union closer to its citizens continued

men, rights of employees and consumers, freedom of movement, safe food, quality of the environment and access to transport.

Fighting cross border crime requires a common approach at European level. For this reason, we will work for greater European cooperation to make society free and safe for everyone. The new threat of international terrorism has proved its brutal cruelty on European soil. It threatens the fundamental European values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law. We, as Europeans, must unite against any intimidation of this sort. No country is immune and therefore we need a truly effective co-operation between European police and security agencies to tackle and reduce this threat. In our response, however, we must defend human rights, due process and the rule of law.

European Union policies must provide for future generations by taking on board the priorities of young Europeans in education, information technology, environment and cultural diversity. We must build upon the success of the EU's youth and education programmes. We give priority to improving the conditions for young people in employment, social integration, social protection and other policy areas. We support a Europe-wide ban on advertising aimed at children. We also favour European action on television access for people with disabilities, including targets on subtitling.

Bringing the European Union closer to its citizens continued

Labour's Objectives:

- A European Constitution which makes the EU more effective and that brings it closer to its citizens.
 - Include a sunset clause in the Euratom Treaty setting a final date for negotiating a treaty which supports the development of sustainable energy sources.
 - Give the highest priority to the fight against terrorism by tackling the alienation at its roots and ensuring effective coordination of the judiciary, police and intelligence agencies, while maintaining human rights, due process and the rule of law.
 - Improve access to information technology and aim to provide broadband internet access for all citizens by 2012.
 - Strengthen accountable European police cooperation through Europol to step up the fight against cross-border crime, drug trafficking and money laundering.
 - Campaign for an EU action plan on television access for people with disabilities, including measurement of levels of subtitling and associated targets.
 - Support an EU-wide ban on television advertising directed at children.
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A humane migration policy

Inward migration poses a new challenge to EU member states which demands a Europe-wide response. Effective action in this area will only be possible if European Countries act together.

European socialists want active, firm and just management of migration and integration, while rejecting a 'Fortress Europe'. We recognise the positive contribution of legal migrants and support a multicultural and tolerant society. At the same time, we must tackle illegal immigration and crack down on human trafficking and exploitation.

We vehemently oppose racism and xenophobia wherever it is found. We oppose attempts by right wing forces to exploit the issue of immigration to create divisions in our society and to undermine the diversity and stability of Europe. We reject any cooperation with extreme right-wing movements and parties.

Labour believes that the decision by Fianna F-íl and the PDs to hold a referendum on Citizenship in the context of the local and European elections is a cynical attempt to play on racial fears. It marks a new low in Irish political life, and should be rejected by the electorate.

There is an urgent need to put in place a Common Migration Policy for the whole of the European Union which respects the desire of many from outside the European Union to make a contribution to our society while making a better life for themselves and their families. Such a policy would also serve the need in Ireland as in the rest of Europe for migrant workers. We will insist that such workers are fully informed of their legal rights which will ensure that they are not exploited to the disadvantage of Irish citizens. As well as more effectively tackling illegal immigration, this EU-wide approach to migration would have two key features. Firstly, we will pursue an active policy of social inclusion and integration. Member States, in partnership with local authorities, must ensure that migrants can exercise all their civic and social rights, and that there is a shared management of migration flows.

A humane migration policy continued

Secondly, in partnership with progressive forces in other countries, we will promote a global development policy that promotes a better life in the countries of origin of migration. Fostering economic and social development in those countries and improving their humanitarian conditions must be central to European migration policy. Europe must continue to be a place of refuge for victims of persecution. It must offer full protection to asylum seekers, while co-operating to eliminate false claims to asylum by economic migrants.

Labour's Objectives:

- Develop a European immigration and asylum policy with common standards on visa rules and asylum status.
 - Use the European Social Fund to set up integration policies that include better education for migrants and community involvement.
 - Fight racism and xenophobia across the EU.
 - Improve the standard of living in countries of origin of migration through international organisations and cooperation agreements and fair trade.
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Building a more secure, peaceful and just world

Labour wants a strong European Union that has a clear voice in international forums, pressing for a just, stable and peaceful world in accordance with international law and in the framework of the United Nations.

As a militarily neutral country, we need reform of the United Nations to enhance its role in ensuring global peace and common security and to make it more representative. It would, for instance, make sense for the EU to have a seat at the Security Council. The European Union must play a leading role in working for effective multilateralism, rejecting the present dangerous unilateralism of the United States, and enabling countries to work better together to resolve conflicts and to respond to new security threats. The fight against international terrorism will succeed only if we tackle the causes of terrorism. The United Nations alone should have the authority to mandate peace keeping and conflict containment operations.

We should further develop the European Security and Defence Policy to become a credible instrument in terms of conflict prevention and crisis management. We support the European Security Strategy adopted by the Council in 2003 which above all else promotes pre-emptive engagement to prevent conflicts and which will provide the framework for a more effective Common Foreign and Security Policy. We are committed to strengthening stability in South East Europe and to encouraging the European orientation of the countries of the former Yugoslavia. We must develop our partnerships with our neighbours in the Northern Dimension and revitalise the Barcelona process for our partners from the Mediterranean basin while the values of human rights and democracy need to be supported in the countries beyond our new eastern borders.

We support the rapid adoption of the draft Regulation banning trade in certain equipment and products which could be used for capital punishment or torture. We will also seek a revision of the January 2003 Council Regulation which abolished duty on certain weapons imports in view of the Commission's acknowledgement that there are products covered by it which also would come

Building a more secure, peaceful and just world continued

under the draft Regulation banning trade in certain equipment and products which could be used for capital punishment or torture. We will work to ensure adequate EU funding for the rehabilitation of torture survivors. We believe that the EU should support an International Arms Trade Treaty, and in particular aim to stop the proliferation of small arms.

In cooperation with other progressive forces in the world, the PES has proposed new policies to meet global challenges, in particular the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. These policies include trade with fair access to our markets for developing countries, particularly for agricultural products, aid for social development especially health and education, higher social standards and greater emphasis on sustainable development. We will step up efforts to fight global poverty and cancel the debt of developing countries. We will also intensify the global fight against AIDS and other diseases related to poverty by promoting access to affordable methods of prevention and drugs for treatment. To achieve these objectives, we must ensure that they are fully shared by international organisations, such as the World Trade Organisation, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. We favour the appointment of a Commissioner with specific responsibility for Development, and a more co-ordinated approach to EU development policy.

Labour will work for the amendment of the commitment on debt entered into by EU Government leaders at the Barcelona Summit by including a human development approach to debt sustainability. We support the provision of additional EU funds for the International Labour Organisation's international programme on the elimination of child labour.

We will push for a progressive globalisation, which not only increases trade with developing countries, but also promotes democracy, human rights and environmental protection in these countries. The EU must play its part in ensuring good corporate governance and social responsibility of business wherever it trades.

Building a more secure, peaceful and just world continued

We must deliver the commitments made in Kyoto to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and then to develop more ambitious targets for climate stability. To promote global sustainability, we will encourage substituting more sustainable alternatives to the excessive use of natural resources, especially fossil fuels.

Labour's Objectives:

- Strengthen the UN and its institutions and improve cooperation.
 - Enhance European Security and Defence Policy in its role in conflict prevention and crisis management.
 - Support the United Nations Millennium Goals.
 - Use EU influence to resume and complete world trade talks to promote global fair trade.
 - End quotas and tariffs on exports from developing countries and reform the Common Agricultural Policy.
 - Ensure that our development policies respect the priority of protecting and sustaining the environment.
 - Increase spending on EU Development Aid.
 - Appoint a Commissioner with responsibility for Development.
 - Build on existing efforts in the area of environment and social responsibility of global business.
 - Support a ban on trade in certain equipment and products which can be used for capital punishment and torture.
 - Support an International Arms Trade Treaty.
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Promote Europe as an area of democracy and equality

Our vision is of a European Union based on democracy, equality, respect for human rights, diversity and the rule of law. For this reason, we support the Charter of Fundamental Rights and its inclusion in the Constitution. We should also support these values beyond the borders of the EU.

We support a strengthened role for the European Parliament as the directly elected voice of the European people. For social democrats, equality is one of our most important values: democracy is not possible without equality. We oppose all forms of discrimination, including any based on race, religion, belief, gender, disability, family or marital status, age or sexual orientation.

Fraud and corruption undermine democracy and we will root them out wherever they are found. We strongly support the Draft Constitution's drive for further reform of the EU's institutions, to tackle the democratic deficit. We will fight for openness and transparency, particularly in respect of the Council and the Commission, insisting on sound financial management, and value for money in projects funded by the Union.

Labour's Objectives

- Strengthen the role of the European Parliament as the democratic voice of the European people.
 - Promote openness and accountability, particularly at European Council meetings.
 - Promote equality and fight all forms of discrimination.
 - Reinforce alliances against extreme right-wing forces and challenge other parties, in particular those belonging to the conservative European People's Party, to sign the EU Charter for a Non-Racist Society, already signed by all European Social Democrat parties.
 - Increase the size and effectiveness of the European Anti-Fraud Office to ensure that it acts earlier on cases of concern.
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